Tribhuvan University

Racial Archetypes in Toni Morrison's *A Mercy*

A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in English

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April 2016

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Letter of Approval

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Acknowledgements

I express my sincere gratitude to my research supervisor Keshab Sigdel, Assistant Professor, Central Department of English, for his insightful guidance and supervision in the process of the completion of this research work. I am indebted to Ammaraj Joshi, Head of Department of English for his scholarly suggestions and regular encouragement which has made this research work come in this present form.

Similarly, I will always remain grateful towards the capable faculty members of the department; their promise in providing the students with through and complete knowledge of the course from the beginning has always remained at the heart of motivation for me. The campus administration, library faculties and cooperating colleagues own to what I am today. The research work would not have come in its present form without their selfless assistance and help.

I must acknowledge the regular support of my friends Ram Prasad Gnawali and Vishnu Prasad Acharya for their effort in completion of this work. They have helped me immensely in collecting the resources through the entire study period. I hereby acknowledge the authors of scholarly books and articles whose intellectual, critical, and creative observations I have used and cited throughout the research.

Last, but not the least, I owe this life and knowledge I have gained to my parents—Kedar Prasad Aryal, my father, and Sharada Aryal, my mother.

Rameshwor Aryal

April 2016

Abstract

The experiences and sufferings that the characters undergo in Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* assert Carl Gustav Jung's idea that the struggle to forget one's past is fruitless, and that past had an enormous impact on (black) person's life. The characters chose the right way to survive: they experienced the painful process of rememory of their archetypes of complicated and distorted history. The researcher examines black individual's quest for identity by demonstrating that past, slavery and stereotypes shaped and determined black individual's perception of his/her black identity in *A Mercy*. This research further argues that Morrison places components of racial archetypes from history of slavery and African-American literature-- in wider American context: by revisiting African American history she revisits whole American history to reveal the importance of the presence of blackness and strong ties between present and past.

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I. Aesthetics of Reconstructing African American Identity in Morrison's Works

For the past decades, the African American writers have been concerned to question the nature and authority of portrayal of black community and characters in works by white-male –elite writers. Through drawing its veil and showing the worthlessness of its claim of being absolute truth in the realist novels of the nineteenth century in the West, these writers from black cultural background seem to assert their own struggle to assert racial identity as a moving principle after their works. One of the main principal preoccupations of these writers, in their fictions or non-fictions, is the theme of travelling back towards black myths, culture and history along with rejection of the received tradition, values and identity. Toni Morrison, like her contemporary postcolonial writers, challenges the stability of realism of the nineteenth-century novel-writing. Her recent work, *A Mercy*, shares the theme of struggle to get back towards black cultural identity. Florens, the main character of the novel, encounters a situation in which she is deprived of her identity as being a black woman in white society and is rejected and treated as a property by the black community as well. She struggles through a strong urge to come back to her home. This struggle of delving back to archetypal identity is the major concern of this paper along with theoretical insights propagated by Carl Gustav Jung.

Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* portrays an interesting group of characters. Jacob Vaark is an Anglo-Dutch farmer, landowner, trader, and lender. Vaark's wife Rebekka is newly arrived from England through his funding an arranged marriage. Their servant woman, the Native American Lina, whose tribe has been wiped out by smallpox, holds major position in the plot. *A Mercy* derives its name from the situation based on the slave girl Florens whom Vaark reluctantly accepts as payment for a bad loan. The permanently shipwrecked Sorrow, daughter of a sea captain killed

in a storm off the coast of the Carolinas also shares Jacob's household along with Willard and Scully, two white male indentured servants. These characters take turns narrating the story, and their voices carry the physical and emotional scars of the struggles of their lives. Especially as each of the women characters tells her story, her awareness of her devaluation becomes a condemnation of that devaluation. All these mixed-race characters are bereft of their roots, struggling for a place in this new world. Each character has peculiar experiences and distinct world views, but they become interconnected as they depend on each other to survive in the wilderness. Their class and racial difference are minimized because there is a “focus on building community as they try to create a pleasant environment for them to live in" (Hooks 154).

This 'building community' element of human existence is a part of 'collective unconscious' theoretically framed by famous psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung. This research borrows the critical insights of Jung to trace collective identity building in Toni Morrison's novel *A Mercy.* This research examines Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* in terms of its engagement with tropes of collective identity formation, memory, migration, exile, and home. This research builds upon the scholarship of Carl Gustav Jung and centers on the analysis of Morrison's re-inscription of the moment of race consciousness.

Toni Morrison’s comment that she wrote to "explore a time before slavery was identified with race" (*Playing in the Dark* 67) has been reiterated at most of the interpretations regarding *A Mercy*. However, Morrison’s portrayal of the colonies that would eventually become the United States is nuanced and intricate, exploring not simply raced issues, but those of gender, religion, geography, among many other, and doing so in ways that engage in an interface with a host of cultural artifacts and

foundational myths. Although *A Mercy* is one of Morrison's shortest texts, it is also one of her richest and requires cautious and meticulous excavation to shed light on its complexity. Moreover, such criticism resists the reaction that interprets "race" to reference black-white relations, given that in colonial America another different people lived here who were subjected to biological mayhem as well as painstakingly plotted genocide. This chapter, then, is intended as an introduction to comprehend various issues in the novel before taking a departure to the present study of racial memories as vital force in *A Mercy*.

A Mercy is a storehouse of various approaches that provide Morrison scholars and students with an assortment of avenues into the text. The observations, taken as a whole, open up the text to a multiplicity of readings, all set against a backdrop of cultural knowledge—including literature, sociology, psychology, and history. One of the recurring themes in the analyses of *A Mercy* begins with an exploration of space—geographic, ecological, and domestic, among others.

James Braxton Peterson's essay reads the novel through the apparatus of narratology, interrogating Morrison's use of focalization as it functions to direct reader attention to the interaction of her characters with the environments they traverse. The attention given to the geographic spaces through which the characters travel—as well as the historical significance of those spaces for peoples in the process of vanishing—raises questions about how and for what reasons the environment is valued—or not valued—depending on cultural ideology. Peterson writes:

> *A Mercy* is a narratological study of early American landscapes positioned as brilliant backdrops to a womanist liberation narrative. The eco-critically focalized approaches to *A Mercy* include at least this component: Studious narratological and eco-critical readings of the

> text that map the relationship between characters and the environment on land and sea, paying particular attention to the tensions inherent in certain characters' perceptions of the environment and humanity's relationship to it. (10)

Peterson ties this layered perception of space to what he calls the "ontological instability" of characters like Jacob (and, presumably, the white land "owners" who will populate the land), who, unconsciously at least, are aware of the impermanence of human endeavors. In contrast to Jacob, Florens, already devastated by her spatial separation from her mother, then re-traumatized by the witch-hunters' treatment and the blacksmith's rejection, foregoes humanity and its zones completely to claim "wilderness" for herself.

Anissa Wardi also explores issues of environment, but does so through an interrogation of the concept of "home." Wardi highlights the fact that, with the exception of Lina, all of the other characters in the novel live on and off of land whose original inhabitants have been dislodged or destroyed. The assumption of an empty landscape to be had for the taking forecloses the possibility that the white settlers will ever find a home, since they are unable to recognize the significance of the natural world as inherently linked to their own existence. Wardi writes:

> In *A Mercy*, Toni Morrison explores the sites and politics of home, the most fundamental way in which humans come into physical contact with the nonhuman world. The novel provides models of social and ecological habitation—how individuals place themselves in biotic and human communities—from the displacement of indigenous people to the consumption of natural resources to the trafficking in human flesh. Set at the close of the seventeenth century, at the dawn of the slave

> trade when race was not yet rhetorically constructed as an absolute category, *A Mercy* links nation building—the creation and inhabitation of the country—to the forced labor of Africans, the decimation of Native American nations and the transmutation of earth into farms. (24)

Wardi distinguishes between the figures of Florens and Sorrow, whom she sees as representative of the African Diaspora, and Jacob Vaark, who prefigures generations of European settlers and their descendants, exploits the land itself and the bodies of the slaves as a result of their assumption of ownership.

However, Wardi argues that while neither Florens nor Sorrow can legally possesses a "home," at novel's end, both occupy Jacob's unfinished home, claiming a space for themselves in the New World.

Tessa Roynon explores the text's interface with Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *Comus*, emphasizing specific images, words, and tropes shared by both authors. Focusing initially on the concept of the journey, Roynon points out the contrast between Milton's Satan, who travels to the newly created Earth with the intent of destroying the paradisiacal harmony from which he is excluded, and Jacob Vaark, who journeys to the New World hoping to re-enter Eden and establish a domicile there. Roynon contends:

> Another dissimilarity occurs in the journeying of Milton's Lady, protected by an "attendant spirit," and that of Florens, left vulnerable to both human and natural threats. Roynon maintains that the connectedness of the two texts enables Morrison to critique the European colonial enterprise and to underscore race, class, and gender in a way Milton did not take into account. (144)

This critic goes on to claim that the chaos prevalent in Milton is echoed in *A Mercy*, but again with a difference. Whereas Milton, and others, have identified the human response to chaos as either naming, in an endeavor to organize the chaos, or violence, which attempts to destroy it, Morrison argues for a third and more beneficial response—the stillness out of which art can be born, the path taken by Florens as she records her narrative on the walls of Jacob's unfinished mansion.

Justine Tally's essay explores Morrison's novel not in terms of any one writer, but in terms of American foundational texts and myths as well as a variety of pieces of literature. Her underlying premise is:

> *A Mercy* is an allegory, links it not only with the Bible, but also with two other heavily allegorical canonical American works—Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and Arthur Miller's *The Crucible.* We can read the characters of Jacob and Rebekka Vaark through their biblical namesakes, Morrison uses the dissonances between the sets of character, as well as the Book of Ruth, to question the Western assumption of divine authority to own land—and, by extension, people. The two American texts work similarly, raising questions about individual rights, including the rights of women, a subject *A Mercy* blatantly explores. (23)

Tally maintains that Morrison's text functions to challenge the ethics of American foundational myths and to critique fundamentalist religious as well as post-9/11 political ideology.

Keren Omry also reads *A Mercy* in conjunction with a different text, in this case Nalo Hopkinson's *The Salt Roads*, which, like the Morrison novel, appeared in print after the bombing of the World Trade Center in 2001. Omry's reading relates

particularly nicely with that of Justine Tally in that both authors consider the significance of Judeo-Christian mythology as it plays itself out in the incipient American landscape. Omry believes that

> Morrison recognizes the importance of re-telling the stories of origin that underlie American culture, since fiction is vital to the identify-formation of any people. This can be said that Jacob's journey is an inscription of the American dream, with its focus on financial success at the expense of domestic felicity. Further exploring the novel's motif of journeying, the connectedness of literacy, knowledge, and freedom, Morrison constructs literacy and aesthetics as forms of response to the chaos that ensued from the acts of terrorism that shook the Western world. (53)

Susana Vega-González treats orphanhood in the novel, both literal and metaphorical, specifically insofar as African-American identity is fraught with the knowledge of an original displacement from home and family that was sustained through the institution of chattel slavery. She writes:

> In *A Mercy*, all of the major characters are orphaned in one way or another; their various responses to their shared plight determine whether or not they are capable of re-creating a healthy sense of identity. European alienation from the natural world further isolates Jacob and Rebekka, while Sorrow, through motherhood, and Lina, through her identification with nature, are able to overcome their orphaned status. It is Florens, however, who makes a spiritual journey to identity that is empowering and liberating. (67)

Reading the blacksmith as what Vega-González refers to as one of Morrison's "dual characters," she maintains that he functions as the Yoruba god Shango who guides Florens to a selfhood, which, as her name portends, blossoms with possibility.

Shirley A. Stave reads *A Mercy* through a Lacanian lens, particularly focusing on Lacan's concept of misrecognition as it relates to the Mirror Stage. Stave argues:

> The grandeur and vastness of the sparsely populated American landscape functions as the mirror into which the Europes, particularly Jacob and Rebekka, gaze and from which they evolve a sense of their own unity and splendor. Like children who have not yet entered the Symbolic Order, they see themselves as limitless and self-sufficient, requiring no community or familial connections. When Rebekka must acknowledge Jacob's mortality, she abandons human contact altogether, seeking salvation in a meanspirited, vindictive God. Florens, on the other hand, possesses no sense of self whatsoever once she no longer sees herself reflected in her mother's eyes. (78)

After her dehumanizing experience with the witch hunters and her rejection by the blacksmith, Florens, Stave maintains, is completely lost to humanity, capable only of destruction, both of herself and others.

This research however focuses on issues of identity formation through racial memory as tied to the collective psychological development of Morrison's characters. Similar to the research ethos of Mar Gallego-Duran's essay, this research examines the four major women characters in the text, considering the survival strategies they adopt in the face of the overarching patriarchy that restricts their legal, economic, and social possibilities. Duran writes, "all of the women have endured trauma, but, during the time they are able to exist in an equitable community, they thrive, using the

strategy of 'rememory' that Morrison introduced in her novel *Beloved* also" (32). Gallego-Duran maintains:

> Each woman must engage with the implications of motherhood in order to construct a workable, or in some cases, destructive, understanding of self. Sorrow's renaming herself complete after the birth of her daughter enables her to anticipate a life apart from the others after their working partnership is dissolved, not because of Jacob's death, but by Rebekka's betrayal of the other women. Florens' survival, on the other hand, is predicated on her arriving at a viable sense of selfhood through claiming her racial identity and rejecting motherhood. (32)

Gallego-Duran maintains that because Florens has removed herself from community and perceives herself purely as individual, her achievement, while it enables survival, is also limited and unsound.

Collective unconscious is a term of analytical psychology, coined by Carl Jung. It is proposed to be a part of the unconscious mind, expressed in humanity and all life forms with nervous systems, and describes how the structure of the psyche autonomously organizes experience. Jung distinguished the collective unconscious from the personal unconscious, in that the personal unconscious is a personal reservoir of experience unique to each individual, while the collective unconscious collects and organizes those personal experiences in a similar way with each member of a particular species. Jung linked the collective unconscious to what Freud called 'archaic remnants' - mental forms whose presence cannot be explained by anything in the individual's own life and which seem to be aboriginal, innate, and inherited shapes of the human mind. Jung considered that 'the shadow' and the anima/animus differ

from the other archetypes in the fact that their content is more directly related to the individual's personal situation', and less to the collective unconscious: by contrast, 'the collective unconscious is personified as a 'wise old man.' Jung also made reference to contents of this category of the unconscious psyche as being similar to 'collective representations' or 'mythological motifs.'

In a minimalist interpretation of what would then appear as "Jung's much misunderstood idea of the collective unconscious," his idea was "simply that certain structures and predispositions of the unconscious are common to all of us . . . an inherited, species-specific, genetic basis" (Jung 140). Thus, one could as easily speak of the collective arm- meaning the basic pattern of bones and muscles which all human arms share in common.

Other critics point out however that "there does seem to be a basic ambiguity in Jung's various descriptions of the collective unconscious" (Anthony Stevens, *Archetype Revisited*, 24). Sometimes he seems to regard the predisposition to experience certain images as understandable in terms of some "genetic model" (24)- as with the collective arm. However, Jung was "also at pains to stress the numinous quality of these experiences, and there can be no doubt that he was attracted to the idea that the archetypes afford evidence of some communion with some divine or world mind', and perhaps 'his popularity as a thinker derives precisely from this'" (25).

Marie-Louise von Franz accepted that "it is naturally very tempting to identify the hypothesis of the collective unconscious historically and regressively with the ancient idea of an all-extensive world-soul" (Franz 377). New Age writer Healy goes further, claiming that Jung himself "dared to suggest that the human mind could link to ideas and motivations called the collective unconscious . . . a body of unconscious energy that lives forever" (10).

Jung described archetypal events: birth, death, separation from parents, initiation, marriage, the union of opposites; archetypal figures: great mother, father, child, devil, god, wise old man, wise old woman, the trickster, the hero; and archetypal motifs: the apocalypse, the deluge, the creation. Although the number of archetypes is limitless, there are a few particularly notable, recurring archetypal images, "the chief among them being the shadow, the wise old man, the child, the mother . . . and her counterpart, the maiden, and lastly the anima in man and the animus in woman" (Jung 58). Alternatively he would speak of "the emergence of certain definite archetypes . . . the shadow, the animal, the wise old man, the anima, the animus, the mother, the child"(58). The Self designates the whole range of psychic phenomena in man. It expresses the unity of the personality as a whole.

In Jungian psychology, archetypes are highly developed elements of the collective unconscious. Being unconscious, the existence of archetypes can only be deduced indirectly by examining behavior, images, art, myths, religions, or dreams. Carl Jung understood archetypes as universal, archaic patterns and images that derive from the collective unconscious and are the psychic counterpart of instinct. They are inherited potentials which are actualized when they enter consciousness as images or manifest in behavior on interaction with the outside world. They are autonomous and hidden forms which are transformed once they enter consciousness and are given particular expression by individuals and their cultures.

Strictly speaking, Jungian archetypes refer to unclear underlying forms or the archetypes-as-such from which emerge images and motifs such as the mother, the child, the trickster and the flood among others. It is history, culture and personal context that shape these manifest representations giving them their specific content. These images and motifs are more precisely called archetypal images. However it is

common for the term archetype to be used interchangeably to refer to both archetypes-as-such and archetypal images.

Jung rejected the tabula rasa theory of human psychological development, believing instead that evolutionary pressures have individual predestinations manifested in archetypes. Jung first used the term primordial images to refer to what he would later term – archetypes: "Jung's idea of archetypes was based on Kant's forms, Plato's Ideas and Schopenhauer's prototypes" (Jung 108). For Jung, "the archetype is the introspectively recognizable form of a priori psychic orderedness" (109) and "these images must be thought of as lacking in solid content, hence as unconscious . . . they only acquire solidity, influence, and eventual consciousness in the encounter with empirical facts" (109).

The archetypes form a dynamic substratum common to all humanity, upon the foundation of which each individual builds his own experience of life, coloring them with his unique culture, personality and life events. Thus, while archetypes themselves may be conceived as a relative few innate nebulous forms, from these may arise innumerable images, symbols and patterns of behavior. While the emerging images and forms are apprehended consciously, the archetypes which inform them are elementary structures which are unconscious and impossible to apprehend.

Since this research focuses primarily in the works of Carl Gustav Jung as theoretical modality, this chapter proceeds on to discuss the concepts like collective unconscious, archetypes, myths, symbols, popular culture and so on.

Prominent psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung points out that all the primal fantasies relate to the origins and that collective myths claim to provide a representation of and a solution to whatever constitutes an enigma for the child. Dr. Carl Jung, with Dr. Alfred Adler, was a distinguished pupil and devotee of Dr.

Sigmund Freud. After playing a leading role in the psychoanalytical movement for several years, this eminent Swiss psychiatrist withdrew from the Freudian group and founded his own school, known subsequently as the school of Analytical Psychology. The reasons at the back of this dramatic departure, while given no particular emphasis in this paper, will, nevertheless, be made somewhat apparent. The particular concern, however, at the time is with the racial, or communal, implications of Jung's psychoanalysis. Jung refuses to believe that art, philosophy, and religion are nothing but the sublimation of repressed desire, nothing but perverted sexuality and egotistic impulse. He cannot see how the unconscious, as the product of repressed sexuality, could have been responsible for the birth of great works. Hence, Jung looks upon the unconscious as a creative force rather than the breeding ground and hideout of evil sexual instincts. While Freud, though genuinely admiring great men of letters, attempted to retain his scientific method in analyzing their work, Jung divided creation into two kinds: the psychological and the visionary. The first one elaborates material drawn from all the mental experiences more or less common to human being, but the second type suggests the world of the primordial, the superhuman, and eludes the furthest reaches of the human understanding.

Jung's reputation rests upon his development of analytical psychology, so-called to differentiate it from Freud's libido based psychoanalysis. The language Jung employed (including the terms "complex," "archetype," "introvert," "extrovert," "anima," and "animus," for example) forms part of the lexicon of contemporary psychology and has had an impact on all of the social sciences as well as the arts and literature.

Jung conceived the collective unconscious as "an inherited brain which is the product of our ancestral life. It consists of the structural deposits or equivalents of

psychic activities which were repeated innumerable times in the life of our ancestors" (*Collected Works* 117). Jung thought the collective unconscious an "ancestral heritage of possibilities ... common to all men" (152). These possibilities of representation he called the "archetypes," or primordial images, which found individual expression in universally recognized mythological symbols (443).

His most significant formulation was the concept of the collective unconscious, which he described as "the deepest layer of the psyche, containing the experiences, fears, memories and all cognitive perceptions shared by all human beings on earth" (3). Each unique individual, he wrote, "also represents the 'eternal man' or 'man' as a species and thus has a share in all the movements of the collective unconscious" (6). Jung demonstrated that we carry "the whole living part in the lower storeys of the skyscraper of rational consciousness .. . The true history of the mind is not preserved in learned volumes," he insisted, "but in the living psychic organism of every individual," and asked, "Aren't we the carriers of the entire history of mankind?" (35).

The hypothesis of the collective unconscious is, therefore, no more daring than to assume there are instincts. One admits readily that human activity is influenced to a high degree by instincts, quite apart from the rational motivations of the conscious mind. So if the assertion is made that our imagination, perception, and thinking are likewise influenced by in-born and universally present formal elements, it seems to me that a normally functioning intelligence can discover in this idea just as much or just as little mysticism as in the theory of instincts. Although this reproach of mysticism has frequently been leveled as Jung's concept, Jung has emphasized that the concept of the collective unconscious is neither a speculative nor a philosophical but an empirical matter. He defines it with many interrogations:

> The question is simply this: are there or are there not unconscious, universal forms of this kind? If they exist, then there is a region of the psyche which one can call the collective unconscious. It is true that the diagnosis of the collective unconscious is not always an easy task. It is not sufficient to point out the often obviously archetypal nature of unconscious products, for these can just as well be derived from acquisitions through language and education. (122)

Jung considers the tremendous powers that lie hidden in the mythological and religious sphere in man, the historical significance of the archetype appears more prominent. In numerous cases of neurosis the cause of the disturbance lies in the very fact that the psychic life of the patient lacks the co-operation of these motive forces.

According to Jung it is not a question of the "'free association' recommended by Freud for the purpose of dream-analysis, but of elaborating the fantasy by observing the further fantasy material that adds itself to the fragment in a natural manner" (123).

Archetypes seek actualization within the context of an individual's environment and determine the degree of individuation. Jung also used the terms "evocation" and "constellation" to explain the process of actualization. Thus for example, the mother archetype is actualized in the mind of the child by the evoking of innate anticipations of the maternal archetype when the child is in the proximity of a maternal figure who corresponds closely enough to its archetypal template. This mother archetype is built into the personal unconscious of the child as a mother complex. Complexes are functional units of the personal unconscious, in the same way that archetypes are units for the collective unconscious. Archetypes are innate universal pre-conscious psychic dispositions that form the substrate from which the

basic themes of human life emerge. The archetypes are components of the collective unconscious and serve to organize, direct and inform human thought and behavior. Archetypes hold control of the human life cycle.

As we mature the archetypal plan unfolds through a programmed sequence which Jung called the stages of life. Each stage of life is mediated through a new set of archetypal imperatives which seek fulfillment in action. These may include being parented, initiation, courtship, marriage and preparation for death. Jung writes:

> The archetype is a tendency to form such representations of a motif - representations that can vary a great deal in detail without losing their basic pattern ... They are indeed an instinctive trend. Thus, the archetype of initiation is strongly activated to provide a meaningful transition ... with a 'rite of passage' from one stage of life to the next: such stages may include being parented, initiation, courtship, marriage and preparation for death. (*Archetypes* 117)

Archetypes abound in contemporary films and literature as they have in creative works of the past, being unconscious projections of the collective unconscious that serve to embody central societal and developmental struggles in a media that entertain as well as instruct. Films are a contemporary form of mythmaking, reflecting our response to ourselves and the mysteries and wonders of our existence.

Jung also believed that the collective unconscious provides fertile ground for the archetypes forming the basis of our religious and philosophical beliefs as well as our dreams, fantasies, and fairytales, all of which are represented by universally recognizable characters and symbols. He perceived how diverse ethnic and religious groups respond similarly to those archetypal images that emerge from the collective unconscious in the form of humorous folktales and sacred stories: "All nations love

the same jests and tales, Jews, Christians and Mahometans, and the same translated suffice for all. All men are children, and of one family. The same tale sends them all to bed, and wakes them in the morning" (*The Collective Works* 59-60).

After more than half a century of inquiry Jung concluded that the core of our being "is strange to us and yet so near, wholly ourselves and yet unknowable" (*Collected Works* 237). Jung called this memories "the virtual centre of so mysterious a constitution" the "self," but added that it "might equally well be called 'the God within us' " (*Collected Works* 237). Jung suggested that while we may never discover the true nature of the psyche, our odyssey through the collective unconscious might spur us on to the creative realization of "more and more consciousness" (*Memories, Dreams, Reflections* 326).

In his book, *Psychology and Religion*, Jung endeavors to make clear from the start what he means by religion. To quote him: "Religion, as the Latin word denotes, is a careful and scrupulous observation of a dynamic existence or effect, not caused by an arbitrary act of will… On the contrary, it seizes and controls the human subject, which is always rather its victim than its creator. The numinosum is an involuntary condition of the subject, whatever its cause may be (*ABC of Jung's Psychology* 16). Religion, Jung would go on to say, is the term that designates the attitude peculiar to a consciousness which has been altered by the experience of the numinosum. It should be emphasized that Jung does not attempt to prove the existence of a super-natural agent. He confesses that he cannot take this step psychologically. At the same time, Jung is concerned with the fact that men do hold to such beliefs, and he is interested in why they believe and the consequences that ensue.

Basic to all Jung's thinking is the idea that, whether or not we are individuals from the start, a full sense of our individuality is a considerable achievement of

consciousness. His often quoted analogy is with an island, that individual consciousness is like an island growing out of the sea, the sea being a collective undifferentiated unconsciousness. This developing sense of our own individuality can be regarded as a growing sense of self. Using the idea of collective undifferentiated unconsciousness, then, this research examines if Toni Morrison's *Mercy* can be interpreted with Jung's consideration of the individual's sense of being a whole. Furthermore, Jung's perspective is applied also to the African American group's idea of itself as being whole and see if the problems that the characters in the novel can be treated in the same way.

Jung was fond of comparing the form of the archetype to the axial system of a crystal, which preforms the crystalline structure of the mother liquid, although it has no material existence of its own. This first appears according to the specific way in which the ions and molecules aggregate. The archetype in itself is empty and purely formal, a possibility of representation which is given a priori. The representations themselves are not inherited, only the forms, and in that respect they correspond to the instincts. The existence of the instincts can no more be proved than the existence of the archetypes, so long as they do not manifest themselves concretely.

While *A Mercy* continues to be mined for its wealth, this research is the opening of discourse, an invitation to response, and a means by which Morrison readers can continue their own interrogation and understanding of this text. Reaching back through time, *A Mercy* compels a reconsideration of America’s origins and invites speculation about the current political, social, religious, and economic climate. As such, the novel is well worthy of thorough study; it is the intention of the present research to inspire further analysis and discussion of *A Mercy* from Jung's perspective. The second chapter is a detail analysis of Carl Gustav Jung's formulation of collective

unconscious and other related concepts like symbol, archetype, race, etc. The second chapter is textual analysis where Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* is to be analyzed from Jung's perspectives. Since this research is qualitative in nature, extensive use of secondary materials published on the subject, both in Jungian psychoanalysis and Toni Morrison's work, is made. Finally, the work is concluded with the theme of this research and other thematic observations.

II. Racial Archetypes in *A Mercy*

In *A Mercy*, the characters move from a life of fragmentation and isolation to a revision of wholeness and sense of community through an acceptance of their African-based heritage. This chapter analyzes this transformation of characters in the novel from isolation to communal consolidation as essential for the survival of black Americans.

Morrison posits that the black community as a whole must attempt to heal from the trauma of slavery and the middle passage by remembering and mourning their past. Forgetting or repressing will allow for the painful memories to intrude upon their lives. This chapter emphasizes on the importance of communal participation in the processes of emotional and spiritual healing and stability through racial memory in *A Mercy*. It delineates the intrinsic value of collectivism to the African community and risks of isolation both for the individual and for the race. Mercy that the white colonizer shows means death, memory, forgiveness, and punishment to Sorrow and company, and also a new life consolidation with the community.

A Mercy reveals what lies beneath the surface of slavery. But at its heart it is the ambivalent, disturbing story of a mother who casts off her daughter in order to save her, and of a daughter who may never exorcise that abandonment. Florens is a symbol of the African Diaspora insofar as her painful status as orphan mirrors the conditions of collective displacement. Jacob and Rebekka initially attempt to live harmoniously with the land. But in addition to farming, Jacob increases his wealth by lending money. Rebekka questions her God as she loses one baby after another to the harsh realities of the New World but Jacob tries to compensate the death of his five-year-old daughter with the presence of Florens around his wife. Rebekka knows that even as a white woman, her prospects are limited to “servant, prostitute, wife, and

although horrible stories were told about each of those careers, the last one seemed safest" (*A Mercy* 75-76). Lina, Sorrow, and Florens who are servants, know that if both their master and mistress die, "three unmastered women . . . out here, alone, belonging to no one, became wild game for anyone" (56). Lina tells Florens, "We never shape the world . . . The world shapes us" (69). Like women all over the world, irrespective of color or creed, these women are also like putty in the hands of men who can take advantage of them any time. As long as they can count on each other, they are able to endure the difficulties of trying to run a farm by themselves and compensate for their vulnerability of being women in a sexist society. As the narrator comments: "Although they had nothing in common with the views of each other, they had everything in common with one thing: the promise and threat of men. Here, they agreed, was where security and risk lay" (96).

At Jacob's untimely death, Lina, Rebekka, Sorrow, and Florens become "unmastered women" (56) forming an isolated female community that harks back to Morrison's literary convention of configuring domiciles that are female-headed and exclusively female-inhabited. As Mistress also lies, delirious, Lina has no choice but to send Florens out to find the blacksmith who can save Mistress' life.

Florens's journey is a rescue mission—her mistress is sick and asks her to track down a man who might help—but it's personal, too, because she is desperately in love with the man she seeks. Florens is imbued with a great desire to find her true love. Her journey in search of the blacksmith, and her love, is ironically a self-awakening journey. Lina has hopes that they will be together after he saves Mistress. The blacksmith will never send her away in the way that Florens' mother did. When Florens says "I am adoring you" and blacksmith replies "and a slave to that too" (139), blacksmith is blaming Florens for her subordination to slavery and to

romantic love. Florens' desire and search for love are natural longings indicative of the human experience that all seek, but they are unattainable and doomed in a cultural environment that is based on the enslavement of others. The blacksmith's rejection of Florens stems from both his contempt for her blind devotion and his fear that too closes an approximation to her enslavement jeopardizes his own liberty. He rejects her, saying, "You are nothing but wilderness. No constraint. No mind" (139).

For Florens, Blacksmith acts as a catalyst for an identity crisis in terms of her race and what constitutes it. Her words to a free Negro could have been directed to all who enslaved her: "You say I am wilderness. I am. Is that a tremble on your mouth, in your eye? Are you afraid? You should be" (155). Florens' passionate love for a man turns into a wild streak when rejected by the Blacksmith. She confesses, "I promise to lie quietly in the dark—weeping perhaps . . . but I will never again unfold my limbs to rise up and bare teeth" (1).

In *A Mercy*, Morrison points out the power that stories have for community and identity building. The women heal themselves through confronting and sharing stories of their pasts. *A Mercy* reveals to her readers the "improvised" nature of race, religion, and individual identities through the improvised nature of Jacob Vaark's family. Morrison's story stands as a clear reminder of all the elements that went into the building of a nation. Now in The United States, different peoples and colors live from around the world, and in some states even the white population is in a minority *A Mercy* are fine illustrations of the journey to self-reliance on a communal as well as individual level. The novels portray successful development of the "black identity" in times when a black person is denied it. During the struggle for self-definition, the protagonists of the novel learn to self-possess their own selves, and overcome the conviction of being someone else's possession.

Morrison comes back to the process of rewriting African American history in her latest novel. As she admits, writing *A Mercy* was preceded by thorough research, as the novel is set in seventeenth century colonial America, which constitutes the most remote setting of all her texts so far. As in the case of the two texts discussed above, in her latest novel Morrison again explores American history, but this time a relatively unpopular aspect of it. She decides to go back to the times when slavery was deprived of its racial context by showing similarities between white indentured servants and black slaves. As she said in an interview: "The only difference between African slaves and European or British slaves was that the latter could run away and melt into the population. But if you were black, you were noticeable (Morrison 2008c). Although some historians would argue against being more noticeable as the sole quality constituting the difference in the situation of white and non-white indentured servants, Morrison proves her point by populating her narrative with a variety of characters who are deprived of personal liberty on a variety of grounds. As she claims, "separating indentured servants from slaves, legally, and giving indentured servants a kind of power that slaves did not have was much, much later the hierarchy of race between black and white had not existed" (Morrison 2008d).

Among those who are not free we find two white male indentured servants, an English girl, Rebekka, bartered into marriage, Lina, a Native American survivor whose tribe was wiped out by smallpox, Sorrow, a half-mad orphaned girl of unspecified ethnicity and an African American slave girl, Florens. They form an eclectic type of extended family for John Vaark, a Dutch settler who marries Rebekka and gradually takes in the other members of his household.

The novel is multi-vocal, as we are told the stories of individual characters by means of a third person limited narration, having access to their thought and fears.

There is, though, one first person narrator, speaking for herself – Florens, whom Morrison calls "the driver of the narrative" (Morrison 20). Although consequently the main focus is on her as the leading character, and the title act of mercy refers mainly to Florens' experience, to her being actually not sacrificed (as she thinks) by her mother, but saved from what was perceived as a greater evil, the scope of the novel is much wider. As Romano notices, "Morrison invests more in character here than in historical critique, eager to explore the thoughts of almost every person on Jacob's farm" (34). Hence, the title act of mercy somehow refers to almost all the characters who are, or become, victims in different ways. As Mantel puts it,

> The America that Morrison depicts is not a land hungry for freedom, but a land that is jittery and repressive, fixated on profit and punitive by instinct. Fate and economics bring the characters together, and hold them together only for as long as it takes to recognize common victimhood. (53)

The little community functions until Jacob's death. This death of the master leaves the women entirely vulnerable and leads the "extended family" to disintegrate. As long as he lives, that entity functions, despite the obvious discrepancies. The wilderness, against which the first settlers led their struggle, turns out to be less hostile and cruel than the approaching civilization with its norms and regulations, religious arguments, violent uprisings and eventual exclusion of every non-white. The widowed Rebekka joins a religious community, probably getting remarried, to survive as "unmastered women alone, belonging to no one, became wild game for anyone" (58). The colored women Rebekka used to live with become marginalized due to the altered situation. Morrison's innovative and unconventional treatment of Afro-American history of slavery, extraordinary depiction of black individual's identity and personal growth to

independent black self as well as complicated narrative structure, masterfully combined with Afro-American oral tradition, pose a challenge to readers and literary critics. Morrison's novels provoke readers and critics' conventional and clichéd understanding of such everlasting and essential but often taken for granted issues as race, identity, African Americans' presence and their complicated history in America.

A Mercy focuses on trauma experience and the importance of tragic historical past onto the present state of black human being. The novel retells the lives and experiences of African-American people at two important periods of history: the very beginning of slavery in *A Mercy* with the focus on the impact of slavery on black people's consciousness and identity. Thus, it becomes interesting to investigate how the writer revisits Afro-American history. Morrison's prose is well known for distinctively Afro-American writing, rich language, and unconventional narrative techniques.

Her narratives combine vernacular, poetic, symbolic, and modern language. The writer has not only challenged negative images imposed on black women, but she has also employed an innovative dialogic style of writing, giving voice to multiple characters that find themselves in multiple settings of time and place. Critic Marc C. Conner claims that Morrison's writing reveals four main elements that constitute the essence of her "black" writing: the presence of displacement or alienation; a close relationship between author and reader; an oral quality to the voice of the text; and a quality of music in the writing that is distinctively black. According to Conner, all these elements together make "Morrison's own aesthetic ideal" (Conner, xxii).

Lina's story passed to Florens becomes a healing process to all of them that include not only their past traumas but their common heritage – their black language which certainly has healing and reaffirming nature. Through the retelling an old story

of bird eggs left by their mother to "hatch alone" (73) Lina in *A Mercy* reminds Florens of their complex lives that are similar to birds orphaned in the wilderness. Lina's stories, told orally to Florens, serve as her own teaching about the dangers of lives that are so similar to their own: "They had memorable nights, lying together, when Florens listened in rigid delight to Lina's stories. Especially called for were the stories of mothers fighting to save their children from wolves and natural disasters" (72). Florens' need and wish to hear the stories of "mothers fighting" stresses the importance of mother-child relationship in her own life. Lina's story of an eagle "falling forever" and trying to protect her babies in eggs from man is parallel to black female slave's fate and condition that is forced to suffer both the cruelties of slavery and its impact on her later life as well as the impact on orphaned black children.

The final chapter told by Florens' mother who revisits the history of slavery from the point of view of black slave woman and black mother, when the slavery is only in its beginning, is especially effective in terms of its oral quality and subjective experience of slavery. What allows Morrison's fiction to be named as revision of black slaves' history is the way she gives subjective voices to the enslaved ones who reveal their emotional and psychological depths. Following Afro-American literary tradition of slave narrative, Morrison explores black women's experience through black female slaves' memories and painful traumatic experience:

> I don't know who is your father. It was too dark to see any of them. They came at night and took we three including Bess. There was no protection. To be female in this place is to be an open wound that cannot heal. Even if scars form, the festering is ever below" (191).

Remembering and retelling her experience as a black slave, Florens' mother denies the existed stereotype that black slave women were "able to produce children as easily

as animals". She also reveals the veiled truth of slavery: black women were forced to breed in order to foster the productivity of slavery. Rejecting her daughter, Florens' mother also denies the image of obedient black female slave and reveals herself of being strong and capable of making a decision. In addition, mother's decision to sell her daughter also stands as black woman's form of resistance against slavery and her ability to resist the commonly accepted controlling image of faithful, obedient domestic servant, or mammy image, who knows her "place" and accepts her subordination. Thus, narrative and poetic language within the narrative becomes a cure for black individuals, a means of experiencing and preserving their Afro-American culture and traditions. In *A Mercy,* the story is revealed through non-linear narrative, with constant flashbacks from present to past make the narrative sound nonlinear.

Although there is the main plotline, the characters' memories of the past and interfering narrator's comments deviate from the main plotline thus emphasizing the importance of flashbacks to the past.

Non-linear method of narration creates a specific effect on the novel: through constant shift in past and present the importance of the relationship between past and present is stressed; past is seen as an important precondition of characters' present state. The fact that some characters constantly come back to the past with their memories and thoughts reveal that past is an inseparable part of present, and that the present traumas cannot be healed without the reminiscences of the past. Therefore, memories of past, although traumatic, serve as a healing power in the novel.

The primary feature of African American writing on thematic level, in the writer's view, is "the presence of an ancestor" in the novels. Ancestor, in Morrison's fiction and worldview, is an important element of black life; in her words, "ancestors are sort

of timeless people whose relationships to the characters are benevolent, and protective, and they provide a certain kind of wisdom" (Morrison 62). Morrison has once said:

> There must have been a time when an artist could be genuinely representative of the tribe and in it; when an artist could have a tribal or racial sensibility and an individual expression of it. There were spaces and places in which a single person could enter and behave as an individual within the context of the community. (Morrison 56)

By this, the writer asserts the importance of both the individuality of human being and the importance of belonging to community or having strong ties with the ancestors. Therefore, past and ancestral values play an important role in black person becoming an individual in terms of providing sense of safety, belonging to your community, and passing on traditions and African American philosophy. In *A Mercy*, Morrison tries to show what happens to black individuals when they have lost ties with past and their black communites. Living in rather alienated city Florens and Lina in *A Mercy* have to experience both the alienation of white society and loss of past. The writer places her characters in complicated situations to show what it means for a black person to be deprived of his/her historical past and black identity and live in present society, and how they manage or fail in developing their black identities: either they assimilate with mainstream society or take extreme means to regain their black self-consciousness.

The novel reveals that the problem of identity or rather lack of it is of double complexity to African Americans. When black people are deprived of their freedom, cultural heritage and community ties, it inevitably leads them to experience the condition of spilt identity. Black people, especially black women, were forced to

undergo and overcome a double process of defining one's black feminine identity: first, they had to find their own roles in racist, sexist and stereotype based hostile society and, second, they had to accomplish their individual self-development. The experience of trauma in the Morrison's novel is revealed as experience of both black community and black individual's. Although the horrors of slavery were experienced collectively, by whole nation of Afro-Americans and their communities, each member of black community was also forced to experience enslavement individually.

Morrison's novel reveals the characters' tension between black individual's inherent need to be a part of the community and one's struggle to shape the identity. On the one hand, being part of the community ensured black person a communal sense of African or Afro-American identity. On the other hand, being a part of community creates limits for black person's individual experience of the trauma and its effects on one's sense of identity. Morrison's novel reveals that for some characters' individual experience, separation from the community becomes vital in order to shape one's black identity. While for others, like for Lina in *A Mercy* community bonds are essential for the survival.

Lina, in *A Mercy*, has lost all of her ties to her family which has affected her sense of self and the need to establish the relationship with someone. The memories of her burned village together with people haunt her and constantly remind Lina of the experienced trauma of her ancestors and vital need for them and their history that has been burned. Due to the brutality of white slave owners Lina was forced to feel shame and guilt of having survived, however, not free at all:

> The shame of having survived the destruction of her families shrank with her vow never to betray or abandon anyone she cherished.

> Memories of her village peopled by the dead turned slowly to ash and in their place a single image arose. Fire. How quick.
>
> How purposefully it ate what had been built, what had been life. (57)

Through Lina's voice Morrison shows what it means for Afro-Americans to live in America, which is their home, but in which they are forced to feel as aliens: "You and I, this land is our home", she whispered, "but unlike you I am exile here" (69). Whereas Florens is portrayed as individual, and she experiences this tension between the necessities to be individual and loved one and the importance of belonging to community: "I am happy the world is breaking open for us, yet its newness trembles me. To get to you I must leave the only home, the only people I know" (6). Throughout her physical and emotional journey Florens stands out as strong, self-assured and independent young woman who defines herself as free, although she is enslaved: "See? You are correct. A minha mae too. I am become wilderness but I am also Florens. In full. Unforgiven. Unforgiving. No ruth, my love. None. Hear me? Slave. Free. I last" (189). Although the absence of her mother still haunts her, Florens wants to assure her mother of having shaped her identity and having become stronger:

> I will keep one sadness. That all the time I cannot know what my mother is telling me. Nor can she know what I am wanting to tell her. Mae, you can have pleasure now because the soles of my feet are as hard as cypress. (189)

Most of the characters in the novels never meet their mothers and ancestors; however, their memories and stories that each of them pass on to each other seem to be a vital link of past, present and future.

In *Toni Morrison and the Idea of Africa*, La Vinia Delois Jennings presents an exciting and provocative perspective on Morrison's varied oeuvre. Jennings

persuasively argues for a persistent Africanist presence from *A Mercy*, underscoring what she sees as Morrison's commitment to highlighting the palpable presence of African retentions in the lived experiences of African Americans. The text is a groundbreaking exploration that may very well be indicative of a sea change occurring in African-American literary criticism.

She painstakingly argues that Morrison is not simply mapping on foreign elements to her novels but, rather, is illuminating African presences much hidden to the untrained and uninitiated eye that have been maintained in the wake of the Middle Passage, slavery, imperialism, emancipation, and a whole host of other social upheavals. Jennings argues that Morrison's interest and proficiency in African cosmologies is an outgrowth of personal memory and, later on, extensive research. Like so many of Morrison's characters, Florens suffers from "mother hunger"; she is "reeling from that longing which ... remained alive, traveling the bone." This hunger is her undoing. At age sixteen, in the novel's present tense, she falls for a free black man hired by Vaark as a blacksmith to design a majestic gate to enclose the compound and new mansion built with the profits of his rum enterprise. Fueled by her own loneliness and the defining experience of feeling unwanted by her mother, Florens's love is desperate and limiting, ultimately unacceptable to a man who owns himself and expects self-ownership, even from a woman who is legally defined as a slave. When the blacksmith's work at Vaark's farm is done, he leaves; later, when Rebekka, Vaark's wife, falls deathly ill, Florens is sent to track him down, since he is a healer as well as a metal worker. "You alone own me," she tells him when she catches up with him, this unwanted, unmoored young woman desperate for the connection that might negate the great loss of her mother. To this free black man who is as sure in his self-possession as any black man could be in this unsettled and

unsettling New World, is because he is respected for his craft and paid for his work. Florens's desire to be possessed by another is repulsive. "Your head is empty and your body wild," he responds. "Own yourself, woman." He refers, of course, to an ownership that transcends the bonds of slavery, an ownership that is promised at the novel's end, but in the most bittersweet of terms returns to Vaark's farm, hardened from being discarded yet again, this time not by a mother but a lover; she is "a docile creature ... turned feral." Precisely what this means is not readily apparent.

On the one hand, Florens remains alone and "untouchable," "an ice flow cut away from the riverbank." On the other, she eventually writes her own story, scratching words relentlessly with a nail on the walls of Vaark's unfinished and abandoned mansion. "Slave. Free. I last," she says, herself her only protector from "any who look closely at me only to throw me away." In the colonial world of Vaark's farm, Florens is not alone in assuming this stance. Morrison places her in an oddly assorted household peopled by other slaves, indentured servants, and Vaark's wife, whom her family shipped to him in exchange for payment? Florens's story is embedded in theirs. In this group, consisting of "orphans, each and all," hunger for lost family or native place is everywhere apparent.

Lina, a native woman, fortifies herself by "piecing together scraps of what her mother had taught her before dying in agony" when her village was wiped out by smallpox. Lena has "cobbled together neglected rites, merged European medicine with native, scripture with lore, and recalled or invented the hidden meaning of things." Moved by nature and natural things, she has found "a way to be in the world"? but this has not relieved the "shame of having survived the destruction of her families." In mastering the loss of all she once knew, Lina has forced herself to erase all memory of her childhood: "the company of other children, industrious mothers in

beautiful jewelry, the majestic plan of life." Instead, her survival depends on her ability to "sort and store what she dared to recall and eliminate the rest.

Vaark's wife, Rebekka, was raised by "parents [who] treated each other and their children with glazed indifference and saved their fire for religious matters." Sold to Vaark at the age of sixteen, Rebekka trades her father, a man clearly eager to exchange her for anyone who will "relieve him of feeding her," for the adventures of the New World. For a time, she relishes the plenty that surrounds her: "trees taller than a cathedral, wood for warmth so plentiful it made her laugh, then weep for her brothers and the children freezing in the city she had left behind." But the deaths of her children, one after the other, including the girl who seemed destined to live, unmoor her. She recovers from the illness that threatens to kill her, but the cost of such constant desertion, including that of her husband, is a bitterness more dangerous than anything that comes before it in the novel. Embracing the very religion she has scorned throughout her life, losing confidence in the relationships that had given her strength in the past, Rebekka turns on the very women who had constituted her family on the Vaark farm.

By the end of the novel, Rebekka has put Florens up for sale, insisted that Lina give up her native habit of sleeping in a hammock, and beaten the third woman on the Vaark farm, Sorrow. Described as "a bit mongrelized," Sorrow is the daughter of a ship's captain, raised "not as a daughter but as a sort of crew-man-to-be." She is the lone survivor of a shipwreck that has left her "with placid indifference to anyone" except a companion imagined out of sheer desperation, whom she calls "Twin." Whereas motherhood proves the undoing of so many of Morrison's women, in this novel and others, it finally helps Sorrow to make sense of her own life and take ownership of it. Whereas she allows her first baby to be discarded at birth, she claims

her second child, a daughter, recognizing that in creating her she has "done something, something important, by herself." Motherhood allows Sorrow not only to name her child but also to rename herself. "I am your mother," she tells the baby, "and my name is Complete." The female characters whose voices animate this novel are "unmastered" women. Their stories, and the predicaments in which they find themselves, speak volumes about the American past, its history of chattel slavery and racism, and the ambiguous nature of the freedom and opportunity it promised. Their fates are as complex as any of those articulated in Morrison's previous novels, full of the overwhelming sense of promise and pain, of hope and hopelessness.

A Mercy vividly illustrates what Morrison, in her book-length essay *Playing in the Dark* observes about the founding of America: "What was distinctive in the New [World] was, first of all, its claim to freedom and, second, the presence of the unfree within the heart of the democratic experiment." This paradox, that the ideals of American liberty and equality were dependent on domination and enslavement, remains ripe for exploration. Morrison's rendition of this story in *Mercy* , about the intricacies of loss and loneliness in a landscape that is both hauntingly beautiful and menacing, is perhaps her most powerful yet.

Three contexts can be identified within which to psychologically analyze Morrison's text: American culture, African American culture, and deconstruction. Each text within these contexts can be read like this, relying on the similarities among the three, as well as the juxtapositions which reveal important aspects of Morrison's writing. Through her own approach, Morrison reinforces the idea of fragments constituting the whole. She introduces these ideas/contexts chronologically, building their relevance to the previous ones to reveal the intertextual nature of theoretical ideas. For instance, once she identifies these three primary contexts, she specifically

applies two ideas from psychoanalysis-"self formed through separation" and the Jungian notion of the connection between language and the self. This is basic to the reading of Morrison within the contexts of American culture, African American culture, and deconstruction. Morrison's novel stages scenes of racial violence and shaming in order to aestheticize-and thus to gain narrative mastery over and artistically repair-the racial shame and trauma she describes.

In addition, allowing these psychoanalytic focal points to emerge through complex readings, particularly terms such as “consciousness,” “spatiotemporal,” and “perceptual,” helps to shift the burden. This becomes all the more perceptible through the ways in which Jacob, via third-person narrative, directly interacts with the surrounding, most notably with the animals that he encounters. Because Jacob is rushing toward his destination, he dismounts only twice, once to free an injured raccoon. The narrative claims that upon liberation, “the raccoon limped off, perhaps to the mother forced to abandon it or more likely into other claws” (13).
More precisely, 'perhaps' is a sentential adverb that sets up a particular belief context, a candidate mental model. This hypothetically focalized passage within the narrative works to establish Jacob’s compassionate interaction with animals. Much of this theme is carried through in his interaction with his horse, Regina. His compassion for his horse is reflected in his intermittent comments about the extent to which he pushes her physically as he rides to Virginia.

> When he stops for a respite, he saw a man beating a horse to its knees. Few things angered Jacob more than the brutal handling of domesticated animals. His own fury was not only because of the pain inflicted on the horse, but because of the mute unprotesting surrender glazing its eyes. (32-33)

Jacob's perception of the horse's "unprotesting surrender," could just as easily be anger, hatred, pity, or even acceptance. And if we accept Jacob's compassionate viewpoint of the brutalized "domesticated animal," then, and here is where Morrison's manipulation of focal points is quite brilliant. We must also begin to question Jacob's capacity to own human brutes, mostly women, and why his compassion for "domesticated animals" somehow does not extend to those domesticated animals that are human. This irony is further present in and through the implication that Jacob is a reluctant slave owner. Ultimately, Jacob's focal points present a psychological dilemma between ownership, ideology, and humanity. The ideology of human enslavement somehow does not contaminate his love for the creatures of the environment, yet his inability to appreciate the humanity of his slaves is put into bold relief by his perspective on animals and the background facts regarding the Lenape beliefs that provide some ontological explication of certain tragic aspects of his life.

As the novel shifts back to Florens' focalization, she is charged with delivering a message to the Blacksmith so that he might return to her owner and provide some medicinal relief from the family's bout with small pox:

> Mistress makes me memorize the way to get to you. I am to board the Ney brothers' wagon in the morning as it travels north on the post road. After one stop at a tavern, the wagon will arrive at a place she calls Hartkill just after midday where I disembark. I am to walk left, westward on the Abenaki trail which I will know by the sapling bent into the earth with one sprout growing skyward. (39-40)

Florens' first-person narrative here begins to develop a panoramic viewpoint of the environment she must navigate in order to fulfill her mission. Once again, Morrison

deploys an African environmental allusion (here to the Abenaki trail) in order to suggest certain cultural, psychological focal points that expand the reader's sense of the characters' situational dilemmas. Interestingly, Florens is directed to memorize her journey—she has to, at least cognitively, own her geography. Moreover, her memory of the Abenaki trail will in ways (to the modern reader) signal the disappearance of (i.e., the absence of memory of) those folk for whom the trail was named. Again, Morrison references a geographic space to suggest certain cultural readings of the folk for whom that space is named. In frontier justice and the legality of treaties, Morrison details the unequal treatment of the Abenaki, especially when it came to the settling of property disputes:

> Massachusetts officials found it difficult to assess monetary amounts to Abenaki loss of subsistence resources from blocked fish runs or trespassing hunters. Moreover, from the English perspective, these claims were less valid as property rights, and the officials were reluctant to recognize them as legitimate losses. (16)

One cultural interpretation of the Abenaki's relationship to English colonizers is that the assignment of material value to the environment was one that derived exclusively from the European perspective. One way that the Abenaki (and other American Indians) were systematically displaced from the environment was through legal means and/or legal remedies that devalued their relationships to the land. Then Florens' walk through the Abenaki trail might also signal her comparable plight. After all, the narrative of *A Mercy* is etched in the walls of a crumbling purposeless colonial residence. If Florens is to exist (even in her own story world), she must avoid the fate of the people upon whose trail her most important journey takes her. She will know this trail by "reading" the environmental signal of the "sapling bent into the earth."

Her record/memory of the image will assist her in the processes of mapping the natural environment that she must traverse in order to locate the Blacksmith. This connection between individual memory and environment is an Jungian perspective on the relationships between humanity and psychoanalytical discourses.

Finally the Abenaki allusion signals the socio-historical context of the Abenaki war (1675–1678): "The Abenaki war had two related levels. Some Abenaki responded angrily to frontier lawlessness; others attempted vainly to address the social insecurities which inflamed English-Indian legal misunderstandings" (18). Cultural issues suggest that Indians' real concerns lay less in receiving justice in English courts than in thwarting the violence done to their own social philosophies of law. Morrison's observation establishes the environment (referred to as territory or land) as an extremely important priority amongst the Abenaki. The allusion to the trail at this point in Florens' first-person narrative summons a 'home-coming' for American Indian liberation and their systematic attempt to resist and "thwart" the oppressive forces against them.

The narrative of *A Mercy* continues to shift in focalization throughout the novel, varying between several iterations of Florens' first-person narration and other characters' third-person narrations, including those of Lina, Rebekka, Sorrow, and Florens' mother. Each of these shifts present interesting examples of focalization, hypothetical focalization, and psychological focal points, most notably Lina's retelling of a colonial myth narrative:

> One day a traveler climbs a mountain nearby. He stands at its summit admiring all he sees below him. The turquoise lake, the eternal hemlocks, the starlings sailing into clouds cut by rainbow. The traveler laughs at the beauty saying, "This is perfect. This is mine." (73)

Almost immediately within this narrative (at this point), Lina shifts the focalization to that of the animals, especially an eagle: "Creatures come out of caves wondering what it means" (73). The "it" is the travelers' possessive declaration, and although the creatures may be wondering, readers can deduce what "mine" means in this early-American colonial context. The mother eagle in this narrative is so disturbed by the strange reverberating sound of the traveler's possessive declaration and wicked laugh that she attacks him. He promptly beats her back with his walking stick and she falls, and according to Lina, "she is falling forever." Lina concludes her story within the narrative here, and Florens promptly asks about the eagle's abandoned eggs: "Do they live?" Here, Morrison fuses the focalizations of Lina's narrative with that of the abandoned eggs when Lina replies: "We have" (73).

Throughout *A Mercy,* Lina occupies a narratologically marginal space. She is enigmatic, and her stories, reflections, and expressions tend toward an eco-critical analysis of the early American colonial environment. In a scene in which Jacob and his servants are engaged in the work of constructing his third house, the narrative is psychologically focalized from Lina's perspective:

> Lina was unimpressed by the festive mood, the jittery satisfaction of everyone involved, and had refused to enter or go near it. That third and presumably final house that Sir insisted on building distorted sunlight and required the death of fifty trees. (43)

Lina sees the construction of the colonial home as destructive of the natural habitat. Moreover, "killing trees in that number, without asking their permission, of course his efforts would stir up malfortune" (44). She offers a cultural perspective that runs counter to the European assumption of territorial domination. Lina's ecological focal point, however, finds validation in the story's denouement.

In this way, this chapter examines Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* in terms of its engagement with tropes of collective identity formation, memory, migration, exile, and home and environment. This chapter builds upon the scholarship of Carl Gustav Jung and centers on the analysis of Morrison's re-inscription of the moment of race consciousness.

III. *A Mercy* as a Shadow of Racial Identity

This research analyses C. G. Jung's assertion that individual's effort to live and his/her struggle to survive is closely knitted with his/her cultural past in terms of Toni Morrison's *A Mercy*. This work asserts the importance of both the individuality of human being and the importance of belonging to community or having strong ties with the ancestors. Therefore, past and ancestral values play an important role in black person becoming an individual in terms of providing sense of safety, belonging to the community, and passing on traditions and African American philosophy.
In *A Mercy*, Morrison tries to show what happens to black individuals when they have lost ties with past and their black community.

Morrison, following African American mode of writing through the inclusion of African American stories, call and response dialogues and occurrences of black grammar, rejects white mainstream language. In order to write specifically African American literature and revisit the nation's history, the writer must reject the language of the dominant culture which created a form of oppression for both African American literature and its criticism. Following African American literary traditions, Morrison proves the essence and power of this tradition: it is their own black language that is most capable of expressing their black point of view and understanding of their history because the oppression experienced cannot be fully expressed by means of mainstream linguistic form. Therefore, particularly the collective speaking and black characters' language is the most effective means to retell their own history. Black language in Morrison's novels functions not only as means of communication and passing on black history, but it also helps them to feel relieved of traumatic experiences. Finally, language for Afro- Americans has been the major means of artistic and aesthetic expression and form of survival that manifested itself throughout

all periods of history in spirituals, slave narratives, writing, poetry and jazz and blues music.

The experiences and suffering that the characters in *A Mercy* had undergone assert Jung's idea that the struggle to forget one's past is fruitless, and that past has an enormous impact on (black) person's life. The characters chose the right way to survive: they experienced the painful process of rememory of their complicated and distorted history. The writer deeply examines black individual's quest for identity by demonstrating that past, slavery and negative stereotypes shaped and determined black individual's perception of his/her black identity.

Morrison places components of racial memory--black history, slavery and African-American literature-- in wider American context: by revisiting African American history she revisits whole American history to reveal the importance of the presence of blackness and strong ties between present and past. Through her storytelling the writer creates a vital historical link between present black generations and their ancestors who were black slaves. In doing so, the writer offers black people the possibility to have a connection to their history and rethink the history, which is theirs, understand and realize themselves better as African Americans in America.

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